

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

Excerpts from the Constitution of the World Health Organization

July 22, 1946

The States parties to this Constitution declare, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, that the following principles are basic to the happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest cooperation of individuals and States.

The achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all.

Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease, especially communicable disease, is a common danger.

Healthy development of the child is of basic importance; the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment is essential to such development.

The extension to all peoples of the benefits of medical, psychological and related knowledge is essential to the fullest attainment of health.

Informed opinion and active cooperation on the part of the public are of the utmost importance in the improvement of the health of the people.

Governments have a responsibility for the health of their peoples which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures.

Accepting these principles, and for the purpose of cooperation among themselves and with others to promote and protect the health of all peoples, the Contracting Parties agree to the present Constitution and hereby establish the World Health Organization as a specialized agency of the United Nations.

CHAPTER II: OBJECTIVE

ARTICLE 1

The objective of the World Health Organization (hereinafter called the Organization) shall be the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health.

CHAPTER II: FUNCTIONS

ARTICLE 2

In order to achieve its objective, the functions of the Organization shall be:

- (a) To act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work;
- (b) To establish and maintain effective collaboration with the United Nations, specialized agencies, governmental health administrations, professional groups and such other organizations as may be deemed appropriate;
- (c) To assist governments, upon request, in strengthening health services;
- (d) To furnish appropriate technical assistance and, in emergencies, necessary aid upon the request or acceptance of governments;
- (e) To provide or assist in providing, upon the request of the United Nations, health services and facilities to special groups, such as the peoples of trust territories;
- (f) To establish and maintain such administrative and technical services as may be required, including epidemiological and statistical services;
- (g) To stimulate and advance work to eradicate epidemic, endemic and other diseases;
- (h) To promote, in cooperation with other specialized agencies where necessary, the prevention of accidental injuries;
- (i) To promote, in cooperation with other specialized agencies where necessary, the improvement of nutrition, housing, sanitation, recreation, economic or working conditions and other aspects of environmental hygiene;
- (j) to promote co-operation among scientific and professional groups which contribute to the advancement of health;

- (k) to propose conventions, agreements and regulations, and make recommendations with respect to international health matters and to perform such duties as may be assigned thereby to the Organization and are consistent with its objective;
- (l) to promote maternal and child health and welfare and to foster the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment;
- (m) to foster activities in the field of mental health, especially those affecting the harmony of human relations;
- (n) to promote and conduct research in the field of health;
- (o) to promote improved standards of teaching and training in health, medical and related professions;
- (p) to study and report on, in cooperation with other specialized agencies where necessary, administrative and social techniques affecting public health and medical care from preventive and curative points of view, including hospital services and social security;
- (q) to provide information, counsel and assistance in the field of health;
- (r) to assist in developing an informed public opinion among all peoples on matters of health;
- (s) to establish and revise as necessary international nomenclatures of diseases, of causes of death and of public health practices;
- (t) to standardize diagnostic procedures as necessary;
- (u) to develop, establish and promote international standards with respect to food, biological, pharmaceutical and similar products;
- (v) generally to take all necessary action to attain the objective of the Organization.

CHAPTER III: MEMBERSHIP AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

ARTICLE 3

Membership in the Organization shall be open to all States. . . .

Source

The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library.

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/decad051.asp